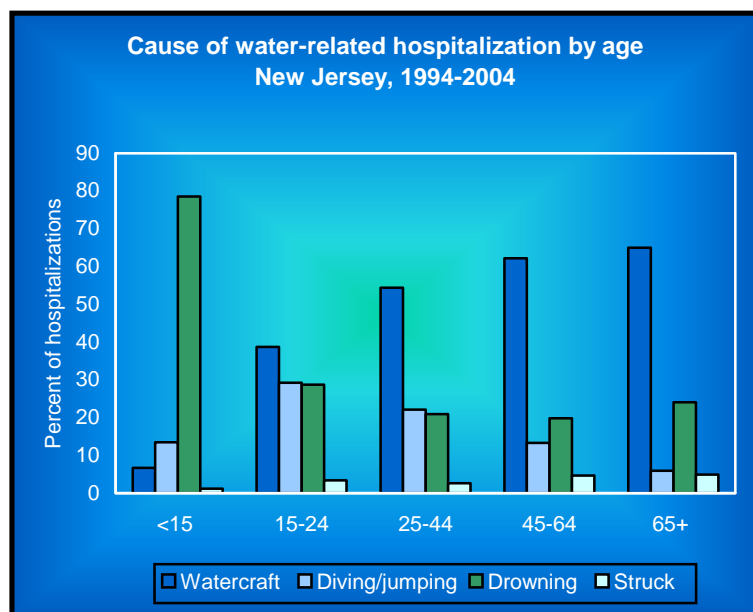


Water Safety

- Between 1990 and 2003, over 700 people died of water-related injuries in New Jersey in the months of May through September. The water-related injury death rate decreased one-third in that time period.
- The majority of water-related injury deaths are drownings, but 14 percent are injuries involving watercraft or diving or jumping into water. 81% of deaths due to water-related injury among Whites are due to drowning compared to 96% of deaths among Blacks, 93% among Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 91% among Hispanics.
- More than 80% of water-related injury deaths are males. The death rate for Blacks is 1.8 times higher than the rate for Whites. The death rate is highest among those aged 1-4 and 15-24 years.
- Between 1994 and 2004, there were over 2,100 hospitalizations for water-related injuries in the summer in New Jersey, although the numbers decreased nearly 40% over the 11-year period, mostly due to a decrease in hospitalizations for watercraft accidents. Hospitalization figures do not include emergency department (ED) visits.



- Unlike deaths, most hospitalizations are for watercraft accidents (41%), followed by near-drownings (38%), diving or jumping accidents (18%), and being struck by an object in the water (3%).
- Nearly 70% of those hospitalized are male. The hospitalization rate is highest among those under age 25.
- 46% of hospitalizations for water-related injuries among Whites are for watercraft accidents, 32% for near-drownings, and 19% for jumping and diving accidents. Among Blacks, 72% of hospitalizations for water-related injuries are for near-drownings, 15% for watercraft accidents, and 12% for jumping or diving.

- In the summer of 2004, there were 615 ED visits for water-related injuries. Like hospitalizations, most visits were for watercraft accidents (37%), followed by near-drownings (31%), diving or jumping accidents (25%), and being struck by an object in the water (7%).
- Nearly 70% of ED visits were made by males and the ED visit rate was highest among those aged 15-24 years.
- The ED visit rate was three times higher among Whites than among Blacks. Among Whites, 39% of ED visits were for injuries related to watercraft accidents, 30% for near-drownings, and 23% for jumping and

diving accidents. Half of ED visits among Blacks were for near-drownings, 35% for jumping or diving, and 12% for watercraft accidents.

- The best prevention against drowning is to learn how to swim. All adults and children over age 3 should enroll in swimming classes.
- Never swim alone or in unsupervised areas. Teach children to always swim with a buddy.
- If you own a pool, New Jersey regulations require that you completely enclose it with a fence with self-closing and self-latching gates. Also, have a telephone nearby to call 911 if necessary and learn CPR. Store pool chemicals in a locked area out of reach of children.
- Check water depth before entering. A minimum depth of 5 feet is recommended for diving.
- Stop swimming if you are tired, cold, far from safety, have had too much sun, or have overexerted yourself. Do not swim if you have consumed alcohol.
- In open water, know the day's weather forecast, swim only in designated areas, be cautious even when lifeguards are present, watch for dangerous waves and rip currents, and always use life jackets when boating.

For more data from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services: www.nj.gov/health/chs

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services' public recreational bathing regulations:
www.nj.gov/health/eoh/phss/recbathing.pdf

Drowning prevention tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/drown.htm

Water safety tips from the American Red Cross:
www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/healthtips/safetywater.html

United States Lifesaving Association web site: www.usla.org

Sources:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, [Center for Health Statistics](#):
New Jersey 1990-2003 Multiple Cause of Death files
New Jersey 1994-2004 Uniform Billing hospitalization files
New Jersey 2004 Emergency Department files

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Consumer and Environmental Health Services:
[Public Recreational Bathing](#)

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control:
[Drowning Prevention](#)

American Red Cross, Health and Safety Tips:
[Water Safety Tips](#)



Jon S. Corzine
Governor

Fred M. Jacobs, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Public Health Services Branch
Office of the State Epidemiologist
Center for Health Statistics
P.O. Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360